



Lenten Reflection for Tuesday, April 12th

James Topping

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

1 Corinthians 1:18 - 31

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Finding a sense of belonging is difficult for me. I'm an only child, a bit of a loner, and I've had a natural tendency towards keeping to myself as far back as I can remember. As a kid I would spend entire days on my own wandering through the woods behind my house, and I can vividly remember lying on my back, staring up at the green canopy of trees, hearing birds all around me, and experiencing a profound sense of safety, acceptance, and peace. Reflecting back on this, I realize that what I was feeling was the presence of God in a very pure and unfiltered way. In those moments, I had a sense that I belonged to something larger than myself. As an adult this feeling is much harder to come by, but I often feel something quite similar while attending services at Holy Apostles.

So, what does a kid in the woods have to do with Paul's letter to the Corinthians?

I have to admit that when I first read this passage a feeling of dread came over me. I always struggle a bit with decoding scripture, I did not have the biblical context to do this particular passage justice, and I convinced myself that it would turn out poorly. A barrier went up, and suddenly I felt the sense of belonging I have as a member of

our congregation wavering; I simply did not have the chops for demonstrating that I was a good Christian by dazzling all of you with my wisdom and insightfulness. However, as I read the passage through several times, I realized that these words from Paul were providing exactly what I needed.

Paul admonishes the Corinthians – who had become prideful and had strayed in various ways from the original vision of the church – by saying “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.” This made me realize that I don’t have to bring a wealth of human wisdom with me in order to engage with scripture, with the church, or with God. And I don’t have to have it all together in order to be worthy of God’s love. The church is a place where all are welcome, and where everyone can experience a sense of connection and belonging with God. This is what Paul was trying to communicate to the Corinthians to ensure that there would be a future church where we could gather as a community, without judgments, just as we are, to receive God’s love.

Perhaps Paul’s intent in writing to the Corinthians was to ensure that the message of the cross remained pure and unfiltered. This meant not losing sight of the fact that Jesus suffered a violent crucifixion. The message of the cross that Paul identifies as the central symbol of the Christian Faith, is indicative of Jesus’ trust in God’s wisdom and His plan for all of us. Trusting in God’s plan is challenging, but by fully acknowledging and accepting Jesus’ crucifixion and sacrifice comes the Good News of his resurrection, and the promise of eternal life in the world to come.



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